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Schulz, M. & Sentama, E.

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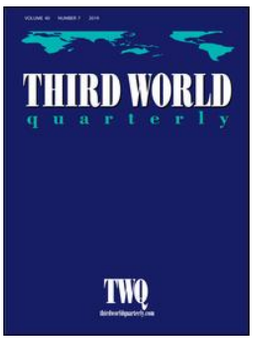

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The relational legacies of colonialism: peace education and reconciliation in Rwanda

Michael Schulz[a] and Ezechiel Sentama[b]

[a]School of Global Studies, Gothenburg University, Gothenburg, Sweden; [b]Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, Coventry, UK

ABSTRACT

This article argues that decolonising educational undertakings is a difficult task, even when the ambitions to apply decolonising approaches are clearly articulated. Our case analysis of two contemporary master's in peace education programmes in Rwanda, that explicitly focus on reconciliation, shows evidence of limited capacity by the educators to decolonise them. We draw from semi-structured interviews with students and teachers, as well as text analysis of syllabuses, course guides, etc, and demonstrate that access for all societal groups to the programmes is restricted: the extent of decolonisation of the education itself, including alternative narratives of the conflict history as well as the conceptualisation of ethnic 'identity' within peace education, is still limited. These master of arts programmes thus preserve colonial legacies and contribute to maintain historical hierarchical relations between the Hutu and Tutsi groups in the country.

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Introduction: postcolonial education and reconciliation in Rwanda

The decolonisation[1] of African educational systems has been a slow and a gradual process at best. Also, in cases where education is expected to be at the front lines of such decolonisation, we identify few changes, as demonstrated further in this article. In the case of Rwanda, we can identify the persistence of colonial legacies despite declared policy ambitions of building peace education that fosters new reconciliatory relations between the two previously antagonistic groups, namely the Hutu and the Tutsi. Rwanda's regime under the leadership of Paul Kagame has, since the 1994 genocide, generally underlined the need to use the educational system as a significant tool to decolonise and transform the previous system and build a new society, inclusive for all citizens, to find ways to overcome ethnic stereotyping, foster one common national Rwandan identity, and reconcile with the painful and violent past. The education system is presumed to play a key role in the efforts to reconcile with Rwanda's historically violent ethnic confrontations between primarily the Hutu majority and the Tutsi minority, which reached their peak during the 1994 genocide period when the Tutsi minority was targeted and around 800,000 people were killed.[2]

CONTACT Michael Schulz michael.schulz@globalstudies.gu.se

This article suggests that the declared frontrunners of change, such as researchers and educators in human rights, peace education, conflict resolution and transformation, with expressed ambitions to break with the past, have had little impact on the educational system, and have not comprehensively penetrated into all areas of education.[3] Although attempts to introduce indigenous methods and thinking into the contemporary education system have been made in Rwanda, a lack of will to apply home-grown critical peace education (CPE) approaches means that colonial continuities persist.

To delineate the above, the main empirical focus of this article is on two university master of arts (MA) programmes that are expected to be at the core of reconciliatory peace education, in line with Rwanda's declared policy ambitions to introduce decolonial training. The reason for limiting our analysis to these university programmes is that the sensitivity of the topics dealt within these programmes lies at the core of the reconciliation issues in Rwanda. We assume that if peace education should play a role in reconciliation and building decolonised education, these specialised university programmes should be the first to give an indication of a change in this direction. We build on the idea that decolonisation of education entails a liberation from Western/Eurocentric dominance; a move from colonised to decolonised knowledges includes a recognition and engagement with other knowledge systems and epistemes. In general, decolonised education recognises the need to involve indigenous knowledges, commonly understood as encompassing 'local, traditional, non-Western beliefs and practices, as well as alternative, informal forms of knowledge'.[4]

We are guided by the following question: How can we understand the continuity of colonial educational legacies through the lenses of critical and decolonised peace education in promoting social reconciliation in Rwanda? To further delimit the study, we have focussed on three aspects that also link to our analytical frame outlined and explained in detail in the theoretical and methods sections below.

First, we scrutinised in what way decolonisation of educational *peace content* has been applied in the two MA programmes. Studying the content included examining in what way the peace education programmes have built in space for students and teachers to question the various narratives of conflict history, as well as the conventional wisdom of colonial legacies. Secondly, we analysed in what way *identity construction* has been approached in the two MA programmes, implying what space is built in for students and teachers to question and deconstruct various social identifications in Rwanda. Third, we investigated how the *accessibility* to peace education for various social groups in Rwanda has been handled in the two MA programmes. The ethnic discrimination stemming from the colonial times also determined who had access to the educational system. Here, we analysed the way different social groups in Rwanda have been enabled and facilitated to participate in the two MA programmes.

We first demonstrate how our research relates to previous studies, and how we apply the CPE approach as an analytical framework. This is followed by a description of the methodology, including of the analytical concepts applied. Then we present our case analysis of the two MA programmes. We end by discussing the results that show how peace education in Rwanda is still filled with colonial markers and symbolism that obstruct genuine reconciliation in contemporary Rwanda.

Colonial legacies and peace education in Africa

Colonial legacies could be seen as 'a holdover from the past that hampers progress';[5] such a holdover links not only to the past but also to the present, and contemporary '[g]lobalisation is seen as an ideological construct used to trumpet western cultures and values and it is closely linked to the imperialist ideology'.[6] As L'Estoile underlines, '[s]peaking of "colonial legacies"' entails in the first place acknowledging this shared history of colonial relations and suggests that they are still largely structuring'[7] contemporary relations between former Western colonisers and previously colonised countries. The coloniality of contemporary relations between states are also simultaneously impacted by the ongoing wave of globalisation.

Previous research suggests that the multi-ethnic and increasingly globalised Africa still suffers, albeit in different forms, from institutionalised colonial practices. According to Higgs, the educational system 'in Africa is in fact not African, but rather a reflection of Europe in Africa'.[8] The prevailing system thereof often acts as a catalyst for breeding continued and renewed hostilities between previously antagonistic groups, as in the case of Rwanda.[9] At the same time, attempts to build indigenous systems, inspired by long-established indigenous methods, were sidelined during the colonial past, and despite decolonisation have not been revived.[10] Particularly in peace education, one might expect that indigenous methods should permeate the training in order to break the link with their colonial pasts.[11] Several scholars as well as policymakers suggest that education is seen as a key institution in African post-conflict societies, and mainstreaming 'peace education' is regarded as being an important tool for establishing reconciliation.[12] However, empirical evidence shows that despite policy ambitions, peace education tends to have a slow pace of change.

In other words, postcolonial agency indeed exists, and partly shapes the new conditions, although not in a deterministic or pre-designated way, but within a context invigorated by colonial legacies.[13] Ndlovu-Gatsheni underlines the epistemological and ontological frameworks of postcolonialism and the importance of 'provincialising Europe',[14] which means to 'confront the problem of overrepresentation of European thought in knowledge, social theory and education …'[15] and to 'de-Europeanise' the world.

Further, we agree with Bentrovato, who reminds us that '[h]istorically, national education systems have proven to be among the most powerful socialising institutions',[16] and that 'far from being "neutral" bodies, national education systems constitute "cultural products" embedded in a specific socio-political context and susceptible to politically motivated change'.[17] The impact of colonial legacies in education in Africa has been well documented, and in particular the discipline of history has been scrutinised in these studies.[18] This is understandable, since historians may have a key role in shaping the historical narratives about conflicts produced, and how the relationships between identity groups in society unfold.[19] In Rwanda, Hilker found that 'tensions remain over [the] teaching [of history] due to government attempts to impose a single "official" narrative of Rwanda's history'.[20] Academics can occasionally, when some political space is allowed, challenge these narratives in 'a back-and-forth process', in which they can play a key role 'in forming new narratives using new academic research and knowledge'.[21] Bentrovato[22] showed with her analysis of curriculum text and narratives of young students in the Great Lakes Region, including Rwanda, how education is politicised and continues to include several pre-genocide practices in present-day classroom situations despite the government's intention to break with

the past. The educational systems were racialised and are still operating as such, albeit in hidden ways.[23] King, who made an important study on the link between ethnic conflicts and the schooling system in Rwanda, reminds us of the need to build education that contributes to reducing conflict.[24] Also, Garnett,[25] who examined education and peacebuilding in Rwanda, concludes that imported global discourses of promotion of human rights, citizenship and reconciliation have their limitations.

Leaning on these earlier evaluations,[26] this study aims to contribute to the previous research by empirically analysing two higher education MA programmes that express a strong will to break the connection with the past and engage with reconciliation. As much as some of the CPE approaches are applied, we suggest that essential critical decolonisation dimensions are absent in these MA programmes. The programmes lean on European critical approaches, with little or no application to the Rwandan context, or inclusion of home-grown knowledge for its specific needs of decolonisation.

Critical peace education in perspective

Peace education has been much influenced by Western ideas. Mainstream peace education has developed over several decades, and is also seen as the offspring of other approaches. The CPE approach should be seen as a response to mainstream peace education that is problem-solving by nature, and thereby preserves the status quo related to structures and power relations. According to Bajaj and Brantmeier, applying a CPE approach implies to 'critically analyse power dynamics and intersectionalities among race, class, gender, ability/disability, sexual orientation, language, religion, geography, and other forms of stratification'.[27] These ideas originated from Freire's thinking[28] that learners should be empowered and serve as the agents of 'transformative change'.[29] The CPE approach, which partly converges with postcolonial studies, also includes 'theoretical frameworks and conceptual resources that draw from fields such as critical pedagogy, social justice education, critical race theory, postcolonial and poststructural theory'.[30] The pedagogy implies a need to perpetually challenge theoretical claims and seek new ways to develop the CPE approach, and map its relevance for the context at hand. As much as race history, postcolonial critique, etc, should be part of a CPE syllabus, Zembylas underlines that, due to CPE's Western origins and few encounters with coloniality, one must be alert to the fact that CPE includes a critical lens of *mainly Western*-inspired education.[31] Hence, we also need to apply what we call a context-specific *decolonised* critical peace education (DCPE) approach, where indigenous experiences as well as critical CPE lenses are included. For instance, although convergence and overlaps exist, the Western CPE approach implies that a liberation of the suppressed is achievable, while with the DCPE greater focus is placed on how the structures of colonisation can be broken down.[32]

These approaches are needed to enable the transformation of the underlying structures in the postcolonial educational system. Zembylas argues further 'that peace education may often become part of the problem it tries to solve, if theoretical work is not used to interrogate the Western, Eurocentric assumptions about peace and peace education'.[33] While the decolonisation of education means a critical questioning of the dominant colonial and Eurocentric narratives, it should also include questioning of modernity and globalisation stemming from contemporary Western discourses and practices. A DCPE tries to find ways to re-examine the colonised people's own knowledge base that previously has been 'marginalized and discredited as uncivilized and barbarian'.[34] CPE may also 'contain a claim to

know what counts as emancipation from domination'.[35] Decolonised education, however, also fosters emancipation, and builds a liberation strategy where the oppressed free themselves of the Western universal liberal peace mantra.

Leaning on a DCPE approach, which has a normative dimension, to highlight colonial experiences and cease colonial practices, we critically analyse how two university peace education programmes specifically have worked with decolonisation aspects. One can assume that the structural conditions, partly laid down by the Rwandan governmental representatives, also provided the space for introducing indigenous decolonial attempts as part of the education. In line with Zembylas,[36] we agree that indigenous agency can partly bring forward innovations that foster change – in this case peace education systems – in new directions. As we argue in the case of Rwanda, some key colonial practices, however, are deeply institutionalised and therefore difficult to eliminate even in a peace education undertaking.

Avoiding essentialisation, we bear in mind that each colonial project has its specifics, and the legacies that are persistent continuities over time need to be identified as such. Subedi and Daza argue that within the postcolonial analysis of specific educational systems, concern and focus have been placed on (1) how they have decolonised knowledge; (2) how they have challenged colonised nationalist discourses, i.e. in what ways national identity is conceptualised; and (3) how marginalised subjects are given space for challenging dominant colonial discourses.[37] Leaning on their approach, we add (4) to what extent all groups in society have access to education that is aimed towards decolonisation. We argue that historical segregation that has fostered mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion of various groups in the education system also needs to be addressed within a DCPE approach. Particularly, within education which aims to overcome historical segregation, it becomes important to inquire how the system has handled this and ensured that all have equal access to resources and opportunities.

In the Rwandan education system, we have deeply rooted imagined stereotypes that historically have been constructed as a racialised hierarchy separating the 'self' from the 'other'. These imagined stereotypes remain as an extra-institutionalised colonial legacy and a dividing line that permeates all aspects of society, and thereby fosters immense challenges for processes of decolonisation. This is not to say that they contain the same components of hierarchy as those constructed during the colonial period; rather, we suggest they have added a different dimension to the existing hierarchical social relations. Further, the Rwandan political context, in which highly centralised government directives exist on how the historical past shall be understood, impacts the space of manoeuvre for educators. Thus, in our case study of two higher education peace programmes, we treat the educational arena as a space in which academic as well as political contestations occur. Hence, the analysis of peace education within the higher education system should give indications of how these programmes work to break with colonial practices of identification, and how this work possibly contributes to reconciliation.[38]

Higher degree peace education in Rwanda

We used two MA peace education programmes at the University of Rwanda for the case study analysis. The two MA programmes, in 'peace and conflict transformation (PSCT)' and 'genocide studies and prevention', are located at the Centre for Conflict Management, University of Rwanda, and are considered role models of higher degree peace educational programmes to assist with social reconstruction and reconciliation. These two programmes

were established in 2009 as part of a capacity-building cooperation with Western Universities (Israeli, Swedish and US) that began in 2003.

Inspired by and leaning partly on the DCPE approaches to postcolonial praxis in education[39] of Zembylas and Subedi and Daza, we developed our own model of analysis for the case study. First, we examined the way the *peace content* had been approached through critical decolonising lenses (ie in what way the educational system has approached epistemic freedom). In line with a PCE approach, we examined in what way space was made for majority and minority voices among the learners to question historical narratives shaped by the colonial powers during the violent and traumatic past. In other words, were critical discussions about the past, between students and teachers, facilitated, and if so, to what extent? This includes a critical inquiry of how colonialism fuelled the tensions between the groups and indigenous knowledge systems in Rwanda. We also analysed the content of the programmes (ie the curriculum and assessment policies), with a specific focus on history teaching/content. As Bentrovato explains, '[c]urricula and textbooks, as elements at the heart of any education system, have been obvious targets for political manipulation'.[40] We also looked at possible discrepancies between the intentions as expressed in the written syllabuses and what actually occurred in class.

Second, we inquired into the nature of *identity construction* (ie in what way the national identity and other identities have been conceptualised and challenged in the two programmes). As Subedi and Daza underline, '[a] critical component of postcolonial praxis is its emphasis on the need to recognize the heterogeneity of cultural identities'.[41] This includes a focus on teaching approaches, but also how critical discussion of ethnic identification was approached. Here, we analysed how the history of identities is presented and how students are allowed to critically engage – that is, either as an interpretation of events that are socially understood, constructed and contested, and in which the individual has both individual and social agency, or as a set of fixed, unitary and unassailable historical and social facts to be memorised.[42]

Finally, we analysed the *accessibility* of the MA programmes for marginalised subjects, and to what extent the programmes work to include all societal groups, by examining who was enrolled, and what possible support base is built into the system. The reasoning is that with the declared ambition to apply a CPE approach, one can expect the inclusion in these programmes of all groups in society. It is important to have representation of students from the various groups antagonistic towards each other in the past (ie a reflection of broader societal identities) in the class composition, thus indicating a break with the colonial discriminatory mechanisms of exclusion of some ethnic groups. We specifically examined who had access to the peace education programmes and what potential barriers existed, and analysed who among the social/ethnic identity categories of Rwandans was prioritised in the educational systems. This was done to get a sense of whether the two major identity groups had equal access.

To access data on how the current peace educational system functions, we collected primary data (syllabuses, course guides, reading lists, schedules, etc) on the two peace education programmes. We also conducted semi-structured interviews with students and teachers in the two programmes to see how the goals of the programmes were implemented and whether there are discrepancies between the intentions as expressed in the syllabuses and the actual teaching in class. In addition, we analysed how the in-class teaching was organised.

During the years 2014–2017, a total of 72 students were enrolled in the MA in PSCT, while there were 91 students in the MA in genocide studies and prevention (GSP). A convenience sampling procedure determined the students and lecturers selected for interviews. This

sampling technique implies that only students and lecturers who were available, and who expressed their consent to take part in the study, were selected. Nearly all among those we approached expressed their consent to participate in the study. It turned out that more than half (51.5%) of the total student population in the programmes participated in the interviews, which enabled us to make some generalisations. The instructors interviewed were nearly all course-convening teachers, and that permitted further useful generalisations. The semi-structured interviews were all conducted in Kinyarwanda (although students and teachers also knew English and/or French), with anonymized subjects comprising 84 students (33 female and 51 male) and 12 lecturers (four female and eight male). Interviews averaged one hour in length; they were recorded and later transcribed.

To different extents, the two authors of this article, one from Rwanda and the other from Sweden, also served as facilitators and lecturers in these programmes, which enabled them to make observations during actual course time. However, we have endeavoured to remain critical and conscious of our positionalities, locations and embeddedness during this study, and as such have cross-checked the study data with colleagues and students. Approaching this study as an 'insider' has meant that certain aspects that have been explored would more than likely not have been approached by an 'outside' analyst. Course evaluations, notes, self-evaluations and conversation meetings have also served as sources of information.

Findings of the case studies

Peace content

When analysing the syllabuses of the two programmes, we see that they both generally emphasised topics such as prospects for peace, coexistence and cooperation between people, on top of the regular curriculum. In the GSP programme, five overarching modules bring up the specific content of the programme, which in turn are divided in several sub-modules. The GSP programme has one module that deals with theories of violence, conflict, human rights and genocide. This is followed by a module that places genocide as a phenomenon into a comparative perspective, as well as relating it to humanitarian and international law. After that follows a module on warning and prevention of genocide, and one focussing on intervention mechanisms during and after genocide. The programme ends with the writing of a thesis.

The PSCT programme begins with an introduction module to the field of peace and development research, followed by nine modules dealing with global systems, research methodology, understandings of conflicts, economic policies and poverty, natural resources and conflicts, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, reconciliation and justice, project design and management, and research methods (part 2). The programme ends – as in the GSP programme – with thesis writing.

One can see that both programmes are built up in cooperation with Western universities. The GSP programme was set up in tripartite cooperation, where universities from the United States and Israel served as consultants in setting up the programme, while the PCST programme was set up jointly with a Swedish University funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The question at stake is how the Western partners gave inputs on structure and content in order to establish the programme. Also, we inquired how the Rwandan and the Western partners worked together, and how they considered and included specific local needs and home-grown knowledge in the two MA programmes.

The Rwandan University developed its capacity building and cooperation with the Swedish partners, and some Swedish teachers have also partaken in the actual teaching and running of the MA programme, although most teachers are from the University of Rwanda. Despite many critical statements made by students and teachers about the importance of decolonising the programmes, we found – with the exception of one module in the PCST programme – that there was a complete absence of indigenous knowledge and tools in the syllabuses. In addition, these partner universities' specific competences permeate the programmes' contents, including the statements of various CPE approaches that are intended to be applied in the teaching of the programmes.

From the analysis, therefore, one can infer a dominance of Western knowledge and the presence of few home-grown approaches and methods. Most of the literature in the reading lists comes from non-African, mostly Western scholars. The literature focuses on comparative approaches, and less on specific and critical analyses of the Rwandan case. At the same time, in both the GSP and PSCT programmes, few international lecturers participated (and these were mainly Swedish), although to a higher extent in the PSCT programme. It was clearly evident that indigenous approaches were missing, even from Rwandan teachers, and Rwandan literature was virtually absent in the syllabuses. The teachers continued to engage with the mandatory Western literature in class.

We also see ambitions to include CPE approaches in the teaching, and to go beyond memorisation of factual knowledge. For instance, we see in the GSP programme an

> effort to fully engage the cognitive *and* affective faculties of the students; that is, to encourage and nurture their engagement in thinking, discussing, arguing points of view and supporting arguments with strong rationales and facts, and analysing to the best of their ability. In other words, the strategies used are antithetical to a rote memorization type of pedagogy.[43]

The PSCT programme states that the students should 'develop a critical understanding of issues related to peace, security and development'.[44] Further, the programme's ambition is not only national (ie inclusion of both Hutu and Tutsi students), but also regional. The syllabus says that 'students from the region study together…' and that the programme sees students come together 'on an equal basis and mutual respect with foreign countries … [and] is in itself a potential catalyst for future peace building'.[45] In other words, clear normative statements are made that indicate that all societal groups from Rwanda should take part in the programmes, as well as students from neighbouring countries; a critical approach should be applied and deconstruction of both content and identities should be allowed. However, as discussed above, we need to separate the declared intentions from actual practices in the classrooms.

The fundamental ambition of the post-1994 educational system has been to imbue it with an ethos of national unity, reconciliation and healing. History teaching, from schools to universities, was thus immediately suspended after the genocide, with the purpose of rewriting a 'true' history.[46] In our own study of the two higher education MA programmes, we find that the teaching is quite similar to that of the past, despite contrary ambitions in the syllabuses. For example, in the GSP curriculum we read that 'the strategies used are antithetical to a rote memorization type of pedagogy'. In other words, there should be room for discussion and deconstruction of historical events, and not solely teaching and memorisation of the official history. However, despite these ambitions, in class there is no room for discussion and deconstruction of historical events, but only memorisation of the official history is taught.

In general, there is self-censorship and fear to allow any kind of critical approach, and to critically question any part of the official curriculum. Many Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) or government supporters, among students and teachers, expressed their disagreement with some aspects of its narrative of past facts. Despite this, the curriculum description mentions the need to understand how peace and reconciliation can be achieved, but without a focus on Rwandan issues. For instance, the need to understand what had happened during the genocide and why humans can become extraordinary violent is not allowed to be critically discussed. Rather, the official government versions of what, for instance, happened during colonial era and later how the genocide against Tutsi in 1994 developed, are the only versions allowed. The following account was confirmed by students, one of whom also stated that some books are used while others are not allowed: 'We do not even take part in the writing of the curriculum …, none; even students cannot dare point to other historical facts in the literature that challenge the government's narrative'.

Indeed, the English-language and mostly Western literature included in the reading lists of the two programmes is of a more general nature, and gives examples from conflict contexts other than Rwanda's. Few Rwandan scholars are included (since most of their work is written in Kinyarwanda and/or French). Many scholars in Rwanda have not published their works in English, not least due to Western practices of publication and gatekeeping, which also explains the lack of inclusion of their works. Those few works that deal with the Rwanda situation rather confirm the official government narrative of the historical past. Any critical readings, Rwandan or Western, are not included in the reading lists. As one of the students contended,

> 'We cannot use any kind of book, such as those of Reyntjens or other similar books as our reference even in our assignments; I mean those books accused by the government as sowing divisions among Rwandans …. Sometimes we wonder why, but we have to follow'.

Freedman et al.[47] argue that this official narrative exacerbates the tensions between meeting political needs and teaching historical thinking, as well as promoting a unified national identity in the face of continuing ethnic divisions. Instead of critical inquiry of how colonialism created ethnic hierarchies, the syllabuses do not include content that shows how ethnic identities already existed in precolonial times. The following statement of a student in the GSP programme, who is a genocide survivor and current RPF member, also appears illustrative:

> 'Sometimes we go beyond limits. Sometimes I feel uncomfortable; I mean to live in confusion. We have always been taught, either here at school or in Itorero,[48] that ethnic groups never existed in Rwanda and that they instead have been brought to us by colonisers. This is what our government teaches us. The reality is that we accept what they teach us just to avoid the adverse consequences … yes, if you disagree, they can treat you as having changed and having joined enemies of the country. If you are a Hutu, they may even accuse you of genocide denial. But in our hearts, we know the truth. All these ethnic groups existed before colonisation!'[49]

Freedman et al.[50] also noted inconsistencies between official narratives and historical records, which highlights the confusion in the current educational system in Rwanda.[51] This was also confirmed by one of the lecturers interviewed, who contended that 'It is challenging to teach Rwanda's history because there are facts of history which are not allowed to be discussed nowadays; yet teaching should be about all existing narratives …..'[52]

In fact, from the interviews, we understand that there was an absence of critical discussions. Where they were permitted, most related to comparative content in the syllabus rather than actually making use of Rwandan knowledge, and they rarely directly applied to the

case of the genocide against the Tutsi. Among the Rwandan lecturers, some had studied for doctoral degrees at their Swedish partner university, funded by SIDA.[53] They recounted that it was difficult to avoid the official 'true' history narrative in their teaching. Classroom content and discussions are not inclusive of multiple perspectives and stories with regard to the description of Rwanda's history and recent past. In particular, Hutu narratives are eclipsed from the discussions. As one of the students contended,

> Due to the fact that practically no Hutu students participate in the classroom, one cannot really involve the various narratives from the Hutu group. Those few Hutu students in the two programmes remined silent in fear of repercussion if they raised their views.[54]

This was also stressed by one of the lecturers: 'Even daring to talk about any Hutu injustices – be it during and after colonisation to present, is prosecuted as it is considered as genocide ideology or denial of the genocide against the Tutsi'.[55]

We found that the programmes' content is controlled by the government's narrative – considered the 'real' truth – about the country's history and the 1994 genocide, without considering or accommodating different/controversial versions or narratives, including those referring to other injustices. This fails to answer many questions that students and lecturers may have in mind.

Hence, general Western knowledge and theorising about conflicts, violence and conflict resolution, and international law and so forth, are not applied to the context of Rwanda, but serve more towards preserving the government's narrative about past events and reconciliation efforts. Neither is there a willingness to allow the learners to be critically engaged in learning about their own conflict history.

Identity construction

Students' ethnic backgrounds are not, and cannot be, discussed in Rwanda. In fact, the use of or reference to ethnicity in Rwanda is illegal, officially proscribed and may lead to prosecution. Yet, as King[56] stresses, although ethnicity is officially banned in the efforts towards recategorisation under the policy of a unified Rwanda, these practices hide ethnic categories just below the surface and reinforce ethnic divisions. Despite the fact that Rwanda has many contested identities, history reflecting those identities and related narratives is not taught in the MA programmes studied here. As one of the students stressed,

> By the way, everyone knows that conflicts that characterized the past of Rwanda are ethnically based. But, in our courses, we do not discuss how our ethnic identities conflicted our history and how each wronged the other. We are driven to only blame colonial powers and the Hutu regimes, which does not solve the ethnic problem among us. In few words, we deny our history.[57]

The historical content avoids mentioning how Tutsi were favoured during the colonial period. It also avoids mentioning that Hutu were favoured during the period of the two republics after independence. Also, ethnic categories are used uncritically in a way that favours one ethnic group over the other. The content that is promoted and taught – particularly when the 1994 violence in Rwanda is addressed – is that Tutsi are the victims. This content refers to the newly introduced label (since 2008) of the 1994 genocide, adopted by the United Nations, as a 'genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi'. This new labelling of the 1994 genocide implies that the Tutsi are the victims since Rwanda's independence, while

Hutu extremists (but, implicitly, Hutu in general) are considered the sole perpetrators. This fosters a sense of shame and guilt among the very few Hutu students of the MA programmes, while also creating silences and occasionally tense feelings of deliberate discrimination against them. As one of the students contended,

> How Tutsi also persecuted Hutu during colonisation should have been part of the discussions. It looks like we are returning to the colonial period where Tutsi were favoured to the detriment of Hutu. We have not learned from our past mistakes.[58]

In addition, essentialist identity categories are used instead of emphasising the historical social and political construction of identity groups. Madani, for instance, underlines that the Tutsi, as non-indigenous, need be understood 'as a political construct more rather than a historical or cultural reality'.[59] This is equally relevant for the Hutu and Twa identities, which could be seen as social and political constructs.[60] But, as one of the lecturers argued,

> This is really problematic. We cannot discuss identities construction in the classroom from different theoretical perspectives since we have to respect the government's narrative. The government wants everyone to stress that there was harmony between Rwandans and that only colonization is responsible for the establishment of ethnic groups and conflict between them.[61]

The official narrative is that, '[r]ather than races, classes, castes, or ethnic groups, what seems to have existed in precolonial Rwanda were categories of identity that varied geographically. To belong to the category of Hutu, Tutsi or Twa was only one element of social identity'.[62] The colonial powers had divided the various groups in the country and racialised them into more and less capable groups. In addition, informal precolonial knowledge was erased. The educational system in Rwanda before colonisation was largely informal, whereby the village or family elders taught their children moral and social values through stories, dance, poetry and other methods.[63]

Access to education

In 1998, the Fonds National pour l'Assistance aux Rescapés du Génocide (FARG) was set up to aid victims of the genocide, including children who lost at least one parent to the violence. It pays educational (school and university) fees and covers the costs of uniforms, books, transport and supplies for qualifying students at both primary and secondary levels. In theory, the FARG can be allocated to both the Tutsi genocide survivors and the Hutu survivors whose families were killed due to their political allegiances or opposition to the genocide.[64] When we examined which students had access to FARG support, there is evidence that Hutu students who survived the genocide have been unable to access the funds.[65] As one of the students related,

> In public speeches, it is as if something has changed and that all have access to education; but in practice, there is another reality. I will give you an example; since the end of the genocide, only [Tutsi] survivors have always received free education and received study materials, but Hutu did not receive this support while many are orphans of the genocide ….[66]

One of the teachers interviewed for this study explained that Hutu survivors of the genocide are not entitled to support from FARG or Ibuka.[67] Instead of being considered genocide

survivors, they are counted as simply belonging to the category of the poor and are neglected.[68] Other interviewees in the MA programmes also emphasised that support from FARG was only for Tutsi, even though some Hutu were also victims of the genocide. We find declarations that the MA programmes studied here are equal for all, without any ethnic-based discrimination. However, in practice, and since studying in these programmes is expensive, the costs – especially for the poor and vulnerable – makes access to the programmes inequitable. The majority of enrolled students are those sponsored by the government of Rwanda through the FARG – almost exclusively Tutsi. In this regard, 92.3% (84 out of 91) of the students enrolled in the GSP programme were sponsored by government scholarship through FARG and identified as Tutsi. As for the MA in PSCT, 75% (54 out of 72) of the students enrolled were sponsored though FARG, and all were Tutsi.

In fact, for the entire two-year programme, each enrolled student has to pay US$5000, which very few people in Rwanda can afford. These fees, which are determined following the fees charged generally by private universities, go to the University of Rwanda's bank account. However, fees for some private universities are comparatively lower. As one of the lecturers argued, 'the fees are too high and only rich people and those sponsored under FARG can study in our programmes'.[69] Students enrolled in the MA programmes confirmed that they could only study because of the FARG support. In other words, in both MA programmes, most students are Tutsi supported by FARG, making real critical debate and reconciliation between Tutsi and Hutu students impossible. Another factor that prevents Hutu students from applying to these programmes seems be the psychological dimension. The feelings of shame or fear due to the government and societal stigma placed on the group make the numbers of Hutu applicants very low. One would expect that given its emphasis, the programme would exert extraordinary efforts in recruiting Hutu students. However, we could not find any indications of such efforts in either of the programmes studied.

In addition, one of the most important detrimental changes made, and which thereby preserves the colonial legacy of ethnic hierarchy in education, was when the language reform followed. These MA programmes, like all other university and school programmes in the country, were affected by it. In 1996, the RPF government formally added English as Rwanda's third official language, according it equal status with French and Kinyarwanda.[70] But in 2008, despite Rwanda being a country with a largely Francophone colonial history, English was made the primary and only language of education, displacing French, which at that time functioned as the main medium of instruction in more than 95% of the education system in Rwanda.[71]

Over the years, several other African countries have used both colonial *and* indigenous languages in their educational system. However, Rwanda is unique in the sense that it switched to another colonial language medium in the education system. For Borg, 'although, in Rwandan context, English possesses none of the colonial baggage associated with French, it would nonetheless seem poorly suited to the role of a neutral, unifying language, given its association with one specific section of the population, ie the (mainly Tutsi) returnees from Anglophone countries'.[72] This is perhaps why most of our interviewees, who are skilled French speakers (whose mother tongue is Kinyarwanda), and who are used to French as the medium in the education system, emphasised that the switch to only English, as the medium for education in the country, bears the political context of who holds power (indicating Anglophone Tutsi superiority). This switch to only English has revived the historical political antagonism between Hutu and Tutsi. As one student suggested, 'English came as an

imposition by the government. We do not like it, but this is the government policy. The problem is that this arises feelings that Anglophones are favoured over Francophones'.

Many of the students interviewed expressed uncertainties about Hutu students applying for English MA programmes in the future. The language 'reform' further denies access to higher education to other groups (ie Hutu).[73]

In sum, the way students are supported and enrolled, in combination with how the regime introduced English as the only teaching language, has clearly favoured elite Tutsi students, notably those who returned from Uganda and other anglophone countries, to the detriment of Hutu but also to the detriment of some Tutsi francophones. English is thus seen as the Tutsi elite's language and thereby fuels the historical legacy of hierarchy between the major identity groups. This risks the reproduction of the colonial favouritism of Tutsi elites, while hindering the possibility of promoting reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi.

Continuity of ethnic hierarchy within the 'All Rwandans Approach'

Our study of the two peace education MA programmes reveals that despite their declared intentions to change and break with colonial legacies, the peace education approaches are neither sufficiently critical nor decolonising, thus preventing real structural changes that could bring about genuine reconciliation and acknowledgement of the past. The two programmes hardly include African perspectives, as the bulk of the referenced scholarship is Western in origin.

Our findings indicate that practices and discourses of colonial education continue in Rwanda's higher education sector where critical peace studies has been introduced. Postcolonial education reflects colonial racial binaries and discrimination, amplifying existing ethnic categorisation and racial mapping. In the two MA programmes explored, the content and pedagogy follow a political set of fixed and unassailable historical and social facts with few CPE approaches, despite declared ambitions of them in the syllabuses. Also, despite the government's declared policy of prohibition on revealing ethnic identity in Rwanda, one is not allowed to critically engage in discussions around identity construction. Despite the current government's ambitious peace education and reconciliation policy, in place since 1994, the examined MA programmes inform us that the underlying structures of colonial beliefs, mythmaking and practices are hardly being challenged substantively.

Conclusion

The case study of two master of arts peace education programmes in Rwanda reveal much of what others have shown in other educational systems that were historically racialised. The colonial hierarchy of imaginary identifications continued to change through the various power elites and the postcolonial state of Rwanda. The postgenocide education in general, and more specifically the peace education programmes examined here, indicate that colonial practices and discourses still inform higher education training and classroom spaces. Although there are ambitions and aims to liberate education from colonial continuities, there is a discrepancy between these aims and the output. Access to the MA programmes benefits mainly Tutsi who are sponsored by the government of Rwanda, notably through the FARG. These programmes have not enabled the creation of a safe space for students and teachers to discuss, deconstruct and question the various identities and the diverse conflict histories.

Our study has demonstrated how the lack of indigenous educational tools, frameworks and methods in the syllabuses prevents a genuine spirit of reconciliation and the creation of an equal-opportunity educational space in the university classroom. We suggest that more comparative research of other education systems from a critical peace education perspective is required, to better evaluate the scope for and methods of decolonising higher education curricula in contexts of colonial histories and violent conflicts.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Ezechiel Sentama is a Rwanda national and a PhD holder in peace and development research from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. He also holds international certificates in peacebuilding, genocide and security. He has been a permanent Lecturer at the University of Rwanda (2000–2018), and a Guest Researcher at the University of Gothenburg (January–December, 2018), and was employed as a temporary Senior Lecturer at the Linnaeus University (2018–2019). He is now Research Fellow at the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations at the Coventry University, UK. His research interests focus mainly on reconciliation and peacebuilding.

Michael Schulz is an Associate Professor in peace and development research at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and has published extensively on various issues (resistance, democracy and state building, conflicts and regionalism), most recently *Between Resistance, Sharia Law and Demo-Islamic Politics* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2020).

Notes

1. Bentrovato, "Whose Past, Whose Future?"; Bentrovato, Narrating and Teaching the Nation; Shizha and Makuvaza, Re-Thinking Postcolonial Education in Sub-Saharan Africa; King, From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda.
2. The Uppsala Conflict Database (https://pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/) mentions more than half a million (accessed 10 February 2020), and Desforges mentions the same number; the United Nations reports about 800,000, but this also includes other victims who died due to other causes.
3. Bentrovato, "Whose Past, Whose Future?"
4. Davids and Waghid, chapter 4.
5. L'estoile, "The Past as It Lives Now," 268.
6. Ogar, Nwoye, and Bassey, "Archetype of Globalization," 90.
7. Ibid., 270.
8. Higgs, "African Philosophy and the Decolonisation of Education in Africa," 38.
9. King, From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda.
10. Mawere, "Indigenous Knowledge and Public Education in Sub-Saharan Africa."
11. See also Shizha and Makuvaza, *Re-Thinking Postcolonial Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*.
12. Tawil and Harley, *Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion*; Harris and Morrison,Peace Education.

13. Jabri, "Disarming Norms: Postcolonial Agency."
14. Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought.
15. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Dynamics of Epistemological Decolonistion in the 21st Century," 17.
16. Bentrovato, Narrating and Teaching the Nation, 25.
17. Ibid., 25.
18. Bentrovato, "Whose Past, Whose Future?"; Bentrovato, *Narrating and Teaching the Nation*; Shizha and Makuvaza, *Re-thinking Postcolonial Education in Sub-Saharan Africa.*
19. See also Buckley-Zistel, "Nation, Narration, Unification?; Herath, Schulz, and Sentama, "Academics' Manufacturing of Counter-Narratives."
20. Hilker, "Role of Education in Driving Conflict," 267.
21. Herath, Schulz, and Sentama, "Academics' Manufacturing of Counter-Narratives," 15.
22. Bentrovato, *Narrating and Teaching the Nation*, 12.
23. King, *From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda*.
24. Ibid.
25. Garnett, Becoming Rwandan.
26. See, for example Hilker, "Role of Education in Driving Conflict."
27. Bajaj and Brantmeier, "Politics, Praxis, and Possibilities," 121.
28. Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed.
29. Bajaj and Brantmeier, "Politics, Praxis, and Possibilities," 121.
30. Zembylas, "Con-/Divergences between Postcolonial and Critical Peace Education," 1.
31. Ibid.
32. Zembylas, "Con-/Divergences between Postcolonial and Critical Peace Education," 2.
33. Ibid, 4.
34. Ibid, 10.
35. Ibid, 11.
36. Ibid.
37. Subedi and Daza, "Possibilities of Postcolonial Praxis in Education," 2–3.
38. Herath, Schulz, and Sentama, "Academics' Manufacturing of Counter-Narratives."
39. Zembylas, "Con-/Divergences between Postcolonial and Critical Peace Education," Subedi and Daza, "Possibilities of Postcolonial Praxis in Education."
40. Bentrovato, *Narrating and Teaching the Nation*, 26.
41. Subedi and Daza, "Possibilities of Postcolonial Praxis in Education," 5.
42. Inspired by Bellimo and Williams, "(Re)Constructing Memory: School Textbooks," vii.
43. From the GSP programme syllabus, paragraph 15. (Emphasis original)
44. From the PSCT programme syllabus, paragraph 10.
45. From the PSCT programme syllabus, paragraph 10.
46. King, From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda, 130–31.
47. Freedman et al., "Teaching History after Identity-Based Conflicts."
48. Itorero is a traditional educational and public policy mechanism in Rwanda, through which the government recreates and inculcates a new citizenship based on a new understanding of the Rwandan history, cultural values/civic education and national identity, since 1994. Republic of Rwanda, National Unity and Reconciliation Commission. *15 Years of Unity and Reconciliation Process*; National Unity and Reconciliation Commission. *Unity and Reconciliation Process in Rwanda*.
49. Interview with a student, Kigali, June 14, 2017.
50. Freedman et al., "Teaching History after Identity-Based Conflicts."
51. Ibid., 675–6.
52. Lecturers interviewed, Kigali, June 16, 2017.
53. Since 2003, there has been an ongoing capacity building partnership project among several universities in Sweden and the University of Rwanda. SIDA is funding this capacity-building project, which includes cooperation between the Center for Conflict Management and the University of Gothenburg.
54. Students interviewed, Kigali, June 16, 2017.
55. Lecturer interviewed, Kigali, June 14, 2017.

56. King, *From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda*, 127.
57. Interview with a student, Kigali, May, 5, 2016.
58. Interview with a student, Kigali, June 5, 2016.
59. Mamdani, When Victims Become Killers, 28.
60. Bale, *Imagined Olympians*, 6.
61. Interview with a lecturer, Kigali, June 6, 2016.
62. Bale, Imagined Olympians, 6.
63. MINEDUC, *Education Sector Policy*, 4.
64. Rombouts, "Women and Reparations in Rwanda."
65. Amnesty International, *Marked for Death*.
66. Interview with a student, Kigali, June 14, 2017.
67. FARG and Ibuka are associations created for the support of genocide survivors in Rwanda.
68. Interview with a student, Kigali, June 14, 2017.
69. Interview with a lecturer, Kigali, June 14, 2017.
70. Borg, "Rwanda's French-to-English 'Language Switch,'" 68.
71. McGreal, "Why Rwanda Said Adieu to French"; Rurangirwa, "Absence ofKinyarwanda in the Current Language Policy," 169.
72. Ibid., 74–5.
73. Interview with a student, Kigali, June 16, 2017.

ORCID

Michael Schulz https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7795-0280
Ezechiel Sentama https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4449-5207

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